

Haiti's 'Baby Doc' hopes
to run for presidency pg 2



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Minister with
Curacao, Bonaire ... pg 3

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THE MORNING NEWS

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Caya G.F. Betico Croes 111 T. 588-9517 F. 5889518.

First Aruban National holiday of the year, January 25... Aruba prepares for a special celebration of "Betico" Day



On Tuesday, January 25 Aruba pays tribute to the memory of senior statesman Gilberto François "Betico" Croes, considered instrumental in the establishment of Aruba's autonomy and right to self-rule within the Dutch Kingdom. It was announced a particularly memorable celebration is planned, as 2011 is also the silver anniversary of Aruba's "Status Aparte."

Betico Croes was originally a member of the Arubaanse Volks Partij (AVP), he founded the Movimiento Electoral di Pueblo (MEP) in 1971, and as leader of that party he became a principle negotiator and facilitator of Aruba's independence, earning him the informal title of "El Libertador."

Born into a very large fa-

mily in the Santa Cruz district of Aruba in 1938, Betico Croes completed his secondary education in Aruba then attended the Hilversum Teachers' Training College in Holland. He was certified as a Headmaster in 1959 and returned to Aruba to teach at Sint Jozef School and the Antonius College in Santa Cruz.

Betico Croes began his political career in 1967, and even though he never held a position as a deputy in the Aruban Island Government nor as a minister in a cabinet of the Netherlands Antilles, he eventually acquire great political influence as president of MEP. He earned high regard as "consehero general" (general advisor) of the Aruban coalition governments, of which MEP was a part.

He was a champion of the concept of "Status Aparte" from the other islands of the Netherlands Antilles, and strongly promoted Aruban national pride, rekindling the popular movement. In 1976 he advocated and expedited the creation and adoption of an Aruban flag and national anthem.

Betico Croes led the Aruban delegation during the decisive Round Table Conferences in February of 1981 and in March of 1983 with the Dutch Government, conducted in Den Hague. During this time, an agreement was finalized that awarded Aruba "Status Aparte" as of January 1, 1986.

On December 31, 1985, the eve of Aruba's official independence from the Netherlands Antilles, Betico Croes was gravely injured in a traffic accident. After eleven months in a coma, he passed away on November 26, 1986.



Crafts and souvenirs for sale

Government Signs Decree to Allow Hospital to Set Own Tariffs



See coverage on page 3

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TUESDAY AND FRIDAY: LIVE MUSIC

Panic as major quake hits Pakistan Haiti's 'Baby Doc' hopes to run for presidency



QUETTA, Pakistan -- A powerful earthquake rocked southwest Pakistan early yesterday, sending panicked people rushing from their homes as the ground shook as far away as India and the Gulf. The 7.2 magnitude quake struck at 1:23 am around 50 kilometers (30 miles) west of the town of Dalbandin, close to the border with Afghanistan, the US Geological Survey (USGS) said. Terrified residents in remote parts of thinly populated Baluchistan province described the panic as people fled their homes, reciting verses from the Koran and preparing for an aftershock. "The quake jolted our homes, we rushed out in panic but it caused no damage," Waheed Murad told AFP from the town of Sibi. Photo shows local resident clearing debris of his collapsed mud house following the earthquake in the town of Dalbandin. (AFP PHOTO)

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AFP) - More than two decades after being ousted from power, ex-dictator Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier aims to profit from Haiti's turmoil to recapture the presidency, an aide said yesterday.

The news came as Duvalier's lawyer confirmed the former leader had returned from exile amid the political upheaval after disputed elections and planned to stay in the Caribbean nation which he once ruled with an iron fist.

"We need to shake everything up so that the elections are annulled and new elections are held in which Duvalier can run," Henry Robert Sterlin, a former Haitian ambassador to France, told AFP.

"Then Bingo," he would be re-elected, added Sterlin, who presented himself as the spokesman for Duvalier, once dubbed "president for life" until he was ousted by a popular uprising against his brutal rule in 1986.

Duvalier's surprise return late Sunday has stoked further turmoil here, as Haiti struggles to recover from a devastating earthquake and resolve a political crisis triggered by tainted November presidential elections.

"He will stay in Haiti forever, it's his country. And take part in politics. That's his right. A politician never dies," his lawyer Reynold Georges told AFP earlier yesterday, adding

that Duvalier was preparing to move back into his old house.

Memories of Duvalier's repressive 1971-1986 regime remain strong, and human rights groups have accused him and his late father, Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier, of presiding over decades of unparalleled oppression and abuse.

On Tuesday, prosecutors charged him with corruption, embezzlement of millions of dollars from state funds, and criminal association.

And in a new legal challenge, four Haitians, including a prominent journalist, filed criminal suits against him yesterday alleging crimes against humanity.

"We have lodged lawsuits for arbitrary detention, exile, destruction of private property, torture and moral violation of civil and political rights," Michele Montas, former spokeswoman for UN chief Ban Ki-moon, told AFP.

Rights groups and opponents have long accused Duvalier of torture and killings, as well as plundering hundreds of millions of dollars from the state's coffers. The dreaded Tonton Macoutes, a secret police force loyal to the Duvalier family, has been accused of kidnapping, torturing and killing up to 30,000 suspected opponents during the 1960s and 1970s.

But Georges protested against the legal moves, saying the statute of limitations had expired long ago.

Residents moved from risk areas in Brazil disaster zone

NOVA FRIBURGO, Brazil (AFP) - Brazilian officials yesterday began moving thousands of people out of at-risk areas near Rio in a flooding disaster that has already left at least 727 people dead.

Ten teams of civil defense and environment officials were evacuating residents in outlying areas of Nova Friburgo, the hardest-hit town, said their commander, Colonel Roberto Robadey.

"We are telling people in the risky houses they have to go," he told AFP.

Robadey said 6,000 people were living in at-risk areas before the disaster, adding that definitive figures were not available.

Reactions from inhabitants ranged from surprise to regret

at being ordered to evacuate places that many of them have lived in their whole lives, but most signed documents accepting the move. The terror of what they experienced over the past week was evident.

The disaster that hit the Serano mountain region on January 12 was considered the deadliest natural catastrophe on record in Brazil, according to media.

The World Bank said Tuesday it would lend Brazil another \$485 million for rebuilding and disaster prevention efforts, with the first tranche of \$290 million expected to be approved within weeks.

Rio de Janeiro's state health and civil defense service gave the death toll yesterday as 727.

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Ingrid Does
Manager

Rosalinda Maduro
Chandette Richardson
Editors

Rosalie Klein
Reporter / Photographer

Yvonne Kromhout
P.R., Sales & Marketing

News Provider:
AFP-Agence France Presse

Caya G. F. Betico Croes 111
Tel: 588-9517 - Fax: 588-9518

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Government signs decree to allow hospital to set own tariffs



Minister of Social Affairs and Economy, Michelle Winklaar-Hooyboer, signed a decree allowing the Aruba Hospital to decide on their own hospital tariffs. The signing took place in the presence of her colleague, Richard Visser of Public Health and Dr. Anoud Boesten. After as many as 15 years the department of economic affairs is submitting a decree like this authorizing the Hospital to present their list of tariffs approved by the government.

Several months ago the Hospital and AZV (General Health Insurance) reached an agreement on what they consider to be reasonable tariffs and to implement this as soon as possible. The minister can always make adjustments to this list of tariffs through the means of the "tariefbeschikking," (tariff's legal proviso). The last time such an adjustment was made was back in 1996. According to Minister Visser, "we have agreed with AZV that we will make changes in the tariffs as well as introduce a more accessible system to cover the expenses. These tariffs will entail expenses not covered by AZV. In this fashion, he continued, the Hospital can create more income which in turn will improve their financial situation."

The decree signed by

Michelle Winklaar-Hooyboer gives the Hospital the authority to charge and define their own tariffs for local and non-local patients. These are tariffs not covered by AZV. This will give our Hospital more freedom and at the same time protect the agreed negotiation between the Hospital and AZV, according to Minister Visser.

The Aruba Hospital is a crucially important foundation with a particular public function.

In our developing world, this is a normal process and something that occurs frequently. The principal client here and the one paying the hospital is AZV, which contributes 95% to the income of the hospital. During the past years the financial situation of the hospital deteriorated considerably and the only way to improve this is with the cooperation of AZV and the government. The tariffs that AZV pays for the services of the hospital are not defined according to what exactly is their real cost, instead according to what the government and AZV are prepared to pay. Structurally the intent has been to pay as less as possible to keep the contribution of the government and the premiums as low as possible.

For years the hospital and AZV have tried to reach a

better agreement so as to increase their income, but did not succeed. This resulted in the loss of several millions. In 2008 the hospital was barely able to meet their obligations and almost declared itself bankrupt were it not for an increase in their tariffs at that time. The hospital is not financially sound and has a debt of several millions at the bank. However, as a result of a more efficient management and better cooperation with AZV, the hospital was able to correct their negative situation and has succeeded in keeping their cost down.

The financial situation of the hospital today can only be resolved if there is cooperation between the government, AZV and the hospital. During 2011, the hospital and AZV has delineated a budget which shows an increase of only 1.5% more than that of 2010. This simply means that the hospital will do less than it did in 2010 and can do no more than it did in 2010.

The accompanying photo's show the two ministers at the signing of the governmental decree giving the hospital the possibility for augmenting their income.

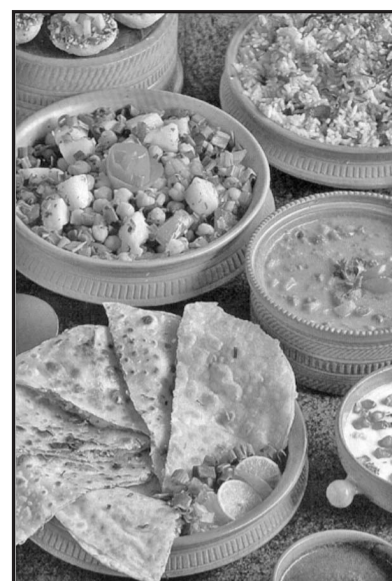
Minister meets with Curacao and Bonaire colleagues

ORANJESTAD -- Today, a tripartite meeting between the Ministers of Tourism of the ABC islands will be held here in Aruba. This meeting, an initiative of Aruba's minister of Tourism, Otmar Oduber, is designed to establish ways to work together rather than to compete with each other, says Oduber.

The three ministers agree that instead of promoting each island on its own, they can unite forces and do this in a combined fashion. According to Oduber, "rather than do many little things, we can achieve one big thing with more benefit for all."

He cites one example of this kind of union, which is the fusion of KLM with Air France; two huge companies who decided to unite to achieve better results for both. This is what the Aruban minister is aspiring, allowing not only Aruba, but also Curacao and Bonaire the opportunity to benefit from this kind of union.

The tripartite meeting will be comprised of the follow-



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Road closed due to collector sewer expansion works

ORANJESTAD – The Department of Public Works, DOW, announces that the department will continue with the expansion work on the Oranjestad collector sewer. The work is taking place at the service road at the L.G. Smith Boulevard between the DA and ex-Bushiri Hotel buildings and the crossing at Arvefa.

The work is part of Phase I which entails the collector sewer expansion from Oranjestad to the Bubali purification plant. It involves installing of pipes and two big sceptic tanks for the sewer system underground,

reason why the road must be closed. The road will stay partially open to give merchants and clients access to the different businesses around there.

DOW kindly asks all motorist not to use the road when closed. The road will be closed for traffic from both sides and will be indicated with traffic signs and barricades.

The expansion work will last 15 working days.

DOW ask for everyone's understanding and apologizes for any inconvenience this may cause.

ing delegation: from Curacao, Minister of development and Tourism – Asbdul Nasser el Hakim, Chairman of the Curacao Tourism Development Foundation – Zeno Cirkens; Director of Curacao Ports Authority – Marcelino de Lannoy.

From Bonaire: Deputy of economic Development and Tourism and Labor – Elvis Tjin – Asjoe; Deputy of General Affairs, Legal Structure, Environment and Nature and Education – Anthony Nico laas,

Aruba's delegation is comprised of: Minister of Tourism, Otmar Oduber; General Tourism Adviser – Myrna Jansen, Special Projects Advisor – Simon Arends, Director of ATA – Ronella Tjin-Asjoe-Croes, Cruise and Niche Manager – Valerie Habibe, Branding and Advertising Specialist – Mario Arends, Director of AAA – Peter Steinmetz. Director of the Aruba Ports Authority – Alfonso Boekhoudt, Director of Civil Aviation – Adi Maduro.

The different important topics to be discussed are:

1. Air Service from Argentina and Brazil, regional Air Service, reduction of airport tax between the ABC islands

2. Cruise: negotiations with Carnival Cruise Lines, combined efforts for cruise tourism, cost sharing and tradeshow, negotiations with other cruise lines, confirm cooperation with APA and a Sister Port Agreement

3. Market: share costs: operation, marketing; Dual Destinations: evaluate the possibility and benefits

4. A final point will be to evaluate the possibility to introduce a Tourism Commission between the ABC islands to explore the routes on which each can work together. This was a suggestion from Curacao Minister el Hakim.

Oduber expects this meeting to be a success and that the ABC islands will be able to get maximum benefit from such cooperation on our tourism and air transport.

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Aruba prepares for a special celebration of "Betico" Day

Continued from page 1



Island dignitaries will pay homage to the memory of Betico Croes with an official ceremony at the Plaza Betico Croes, located behind the Cas di Cultura in Oranjestad, on his birthday, which traditionally includes an address from Aruba's Prime Minister. This protocol ceremony will begin at 9:00 a.m. and includes the placement of memorial wreaths by various groups.

An elaborate evening festival is planned, beginning at 7:00 p.m.. Local music and dance, featuring noted island

vocalists and troupes, will showcase typical island culture. All are welcome to this gala "street fair" sporting food stalls and handicraft booths with island cuisine and crafts. Aside from the events in the Plaza Betico Croes, a number of community centers and sport federations will conduct various activities throughout the weekend, the most famous being the Betico Croes Memorial 6 and 10k Fun Run/Walk, conducted by IDEFRE. This year, the prestigious event that attracts athletes from all over

the region will begin and end at the Betico Memorial Sport Hall in Santa Croes, from 5:30 until 7:30 p.m..

Robert Maduro, head of the January 25 Events Committee, advised any groups or community centers planning special activities for the holiday please contact organizers of the days events to facilitate the issuance of permits and the cooperation of police and DOW. They can be reached at 582-3907 or 737-3645.

by Rosalie Klein



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Program for the 25th anniversary celebration of Status Aparte is ready



ORANJESTAD – The Committee charged with organizing the festivities for Aruba's 25th anniversary celebration of being an autonomous state within the Dutch Kingdom announced that everything is ready for the festivities to begin. Under the direction of Alice van Romondt, the committee together with members of Department of Culture's Management Team presented the program for the celebration to Aruba's Minister of Culture, Michelle Hooyboer-Winklaar.

There are more than 100 individuals from various com-

mittees are involved in organizing the programs that will involve entire communities and islanders of all ages in cultural, educational and sporting events. By the end of January it is promised a website will be online with ample information regarding the different activities. Additionally, all residents will receive a Newsletter by mail every month, with a complete program soon to be published.

A part of the festivities already began on January 1, 2011 with a flag raising ceremony at the roundabout in Pa-

radera, and just this week, a Stamp Exposition opened on January 18 at the Aruba Postal Services offices in Oranjestad.

The committee announced there will be special activities conducted the 18th of every month. The next event scheduled is on February 18; a Numismatic Exposition, which will go on display at the Central Bank, which was also founded 25 years ago.

The committee promises that the tradition celebration of Aruba's National Flag and Anthem Day on March 18 will be particular spectacular this year.

Maggie the Magnificent Humming Bird

By: Roland W. Peterson

There is a big beautiful bouquet of flowers
 He can't decide which flower is the prettiest
 Then suddenly he hears a zzzzzzzooming over his head
 It is his little friend Maggie the Magnificent Humming Bird

Without hesitating the humming bird goes straight to the flower she finds best

Tenderly she dips her long beak into the flower
 Her heart is filled
 Her colors shine in the sun rays

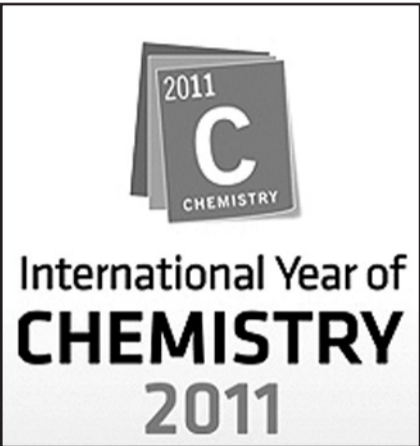
Then just as silently as she came
 Little Maggie flies away
 The bouquet still standing as beautiful as ever for another day

And he . . . he still can't determine which flower is the most beautiful of them all
 Maybe . . . maybe he should ask the little Humming Bird how to decide.



Sci-Tech

World chemistry year to launch biggest-ever experiment



PARIS (AFP) - Schoolchildren around the world are being asked to take part in what organisers hope will be the biggest chemistry experiment of all time.

Budding scientists at primary and secondary school level will be asked to carry out four tests on water as part of the International Year of Chemistry, due to be launched in Paris on January 27.

US plucks tiny daisy from brink of extinction

WASHINGTON (AFP) - The tiny Maguire daisy, which grows in the desert southwest of the United States, has been plucked from the edge of extinction after a 25-year conservation effort, US officials have announced.

The minuscule member of the sunflower family had dropped to just seven known plants when it was listed as endangered in 1985, but with numbers of the daisy now back up to 163,000 plants in 10 populations in Utah, it will be removed from the endangered species list, the Interior Department said Tuesday.

"Working in partnership with other federal agencies, state and local governments, and other partners, we can ensure irreplaceable plants and animals such as the Maguire daisy and the habitat they depend upon are pre-

"We are hoping that 10,000 schools will take part," said Fabienne Meyers, associate director of the International Union for Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC), which is teaming up with the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) for the project.

Investigations will include testing water for acidity and learning how to filter and distil it.

Small-scale chemistry kits are being distributed to schools in some developing countries to help them, Meyers said.

Once the experiments are complete, the children will be able to enter the results onto an interactive map on the International Chemistry Year website (<http://www.chemistry2011.org/>).

served for future generations," said Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, Tom Strickland.

The Maguire daisy (Latin name: *Erigeron maguirei*) is a perennial plant with white or pink flowers roughly the size of an American dime or a one-cent Euro coin.

The daisy joins 20 other mostly animal species that have been removed from the endangered species list, including the brown pelican, the bald eagle, a symbol of the United States; the Arctic peregrine falcon and the American alligator.

The tiny daisy will be monitored for at least 10 years to ensure that it continues to flourish and to watch for "potential threat factors."

Twitter opens Korean-language website

SEOUL (AFP) - Microblogging site Twitter on Wednesday opened a Korean-language website in an attempt to expand further into a market that has grown almost tenfold in the past year.

Korean is now one of seven languages offered on Twitter.com.

"The Korean-language tweets have grown even faster than tweets in general. We've seen over 3,400 percent growth...of Korean-language tweets from January 2010 through December," Yonhap news agency quoted Twitter co-founder Evan Williams as saying during a visit to Seoul.

South Korea is one of the world's most wired nations, with a high-speed broadband service and a booming business in smartphones.

There were more than 2.2 million registered South Korean Twitter users as of last month compared with 250,000 in January 2010, according to a recent report by Daumsoft.

Twitter, which was created in 2006 and allows people to post short messages of no more than 140 characters, had 175 million registered users worldwide as of November 1 and transmitted 25 billion "Tweets" last year.

The popularity of the site has been boosted as Celebrities and high-profile CEOs such as Doosan Infracore Chairman Park Yong-Man and Chung Yong-Jin, vice chairman of retail giant Shinsegae, have joined it to communicate with fans and customers.

It gained further prominence in Seoul after North Korea, one of the world's most reclusive nations, opened an account last year as part of its escalating on-line propaganda efforts.

'Toylets' games make a splash in Japan urinals



TOKYO (AFP) - Japanese toilets are famed for functions such as posterior shower jets and perfume bursts, but entertainment company Sega has gone a step further by installing urine-controlled games in Tokyo urinals.

Four types of "Toylets" games are available to be played during a test period ending this month at four male bathrooms in pubs and game arcades, in a project aimed at drawing attention to digital adverts.

Each urinal is fitted with a pressure sensor, and a small digital display is placed at eye level. Digital adverts are shown after the games.

Games include "Graffiti Eraser" in which a user tries to aim at the pressure sensor in the urinal to erase virtual graffiti on the display.

Or there's "Mannekin Pis" -- named after a Brussels

fountain depicting a urinating boy -- which measures the volume of the user's stream.

Another is called "The North Wind and The Sun and Me", in which the strength of a urine stream determines the extent to which a virtual girl's skirt gets blown up by a digital wind.

"Splashing Battle!" pits the user against the previous urinal user in terms of stream strength.

First-time foreign visitors to Japan are often baffled by the complexity of Japanese high-tech toilets, which feature computerised control panels, usually with Japanese language instructions as well as pictograms.

The "Toylets" will only be available at limited locations until January 31, "with no concrete plans to make them into actual products," said a Sega spokesman.

S. Korea orders hotels, stores to turn down heat

SEOUL (AFP) - South Korea has ordered department stores, offices and hotels to turn down the heating, officials said Wednesday, amid fears of power blackouts because of a prolonged cold spell.

From next Monday, the temperature inside 441 buildings with large energy con-

sumption will be limited to 20 degrees Celsius (68 degrees Fahrenheit), the Ministry of Knowledge Economy said.

The order, effective until February 18, covers department and discount stores, hotels, office buildings and schools and offenders face fines of up to three million won (\$2,690).

The ministry had earlier ordered civil servants to keep office temperatures below 18 degrees Celsius, and encouraged them to wear thermal underwear to battle the cold.

"As oil prices are expected to remain high throughout the winter and electricity demand is setting new records, there is a common understanding that there needs to be tougher measures to reduce demand," the ministry said on its website.

India aims for Asia's biggest tidal power plant

AHMEDABAD, India (AFP) - The western Indian state of Gujarat is aiming to host the first commercial-scale tidal power project in Asia after signing a deal with a British marine energy company, officials said Wednesday.

State Energy Minister Saurabh Patel told AFP that two or three locations had been identified in the Gulf of

Kutch where turbines from London-based Atlantis Resources Corporation could be set up.

A preliminary agreement was signed last week between the government and Atlantis which foresees the start of construction later this year, with initial capacity of 50 megawatts (MW) and long-term capacity of up to 250 MW.

Patel said environmental and commercial factors would be taken into consideration, as well as highly sensitive territorial claims in the area where the sea is divided between India and Pakistan.

The company said the project would "require hundreds of millions of dollars of investment in tidal turbines," adding that its studies of the

waters around Gujarat showed that tides there were strong enough to generate 300MW of power.

Highly industrialised Gujarat, one of the best performing states in the country economically, has installed electricity capacity of more than 11,000 MW at present, meaning tidal power would meet only a fraction of total demand.

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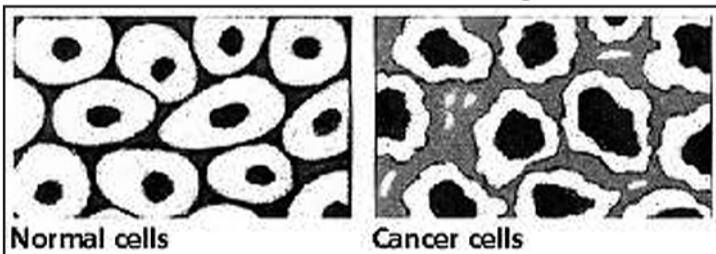


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Health & Living

Japanese hospital to test new cancer therapy



TOKYO, Japan (AFP) — Medical researchers in Japan say they will start the world's first clinical studies of a radiation therapy using accelerator-based neutron beams to kill cancer cells.

The National Cancer Centre in Tokyo and a Japanese medical equipment maker -- Cancer Intelligence Care Systems -- plan to start the studies using

"boron neutron capture therapy (BNCT)" in three years, the centre said.

The BNCT is an innovative radiation treatment which kills cancer cells selectively without side-effects, but it requires a massive facility including a nuclear reactor to produce neutron beams.

By using a particle accelerator, which is cheaper, safer and smaller than a reactor, it will become feasible for a hospital to provide the therapy on actual patients, the centre told journalists.

The centre hopes to try the special radiation therapy on patients with cancers that have been difficult to treat in conventional procedures, such as brain tumors and melanoma, it said.

Protecting your eyes.....

We make sure our skin is protected constantly with sunscreen and even bug repellent. But, are we doing all that we can to ensure our whole body is protected? One of the most vulnerable areas on our body when we go outside on sunny days is our eyes. Yes, the sunglasses that we sport, or should be sporting, are more than just a status symbol. They are the most valuable protection we can use when looking to shield our peepers from the sun's harmful effects.

We are all aware of ultraviolet (UV) rays and the damage they can do to our skin but we might not often think of the damage they are doing to our eyes. Permanent damage can occur to the eyes when they are left exposed to UV light. Light that is reflected from water, sand, pavement or even snow can be the most harmful since they can actually burn the surface of the eye. Frequent exposure over a prolonged period of time can cause damage to the internal structures of the eye, namely the lens and the retina. Exposure to the sun without sunglasses



can also cause the formation of cataracts, a clouding of the lens of the eye. This is so dangerous that if enough damage is done, cataract surgery may be required to remove the lens and an artificial one will replace it.

Also, due to the depletion of the ozone layer, the amount of UV light we are exposed to is increasing with each passing year. While cataracts used to rarely be seen in anyone who was younger than seventy, children who are often exposed to UV light are now developing cataracts in their twenties and thirties.

So, now that we are aware of the dangers, how do we know what to look for when

selecting the right pair of sunglasses to protect us? First and foremost, it is important to check the label of sunglasses before you purchase them. It will tell you the level of UV protection. Ideally, sunglasses should block 99-100% of UV light, including both UV-A and UV-B light. It is wise to purchase a pair of wraparound glasses or glasses that have side shields to keep sunlight from entering eyes from the sides. Also it's important to be aware that darker lenses do not necessarily mean better protection or even good UV light protection. The same holds true for expensive sunglasses. They may just be more durable or more fashionable.

There are two other points that are important to keep in mind. The first is that everybody should wear sunglasses for adequate protection, and that includes children. As stated previously, children need protection from an early age now. The other point is that you should check the UV Index daily. This will tell you how strong the sun's rays will be.



Take time to get acquainted with

NICKY
BEACH
ARUBA



There is a particularly lovely beach on Aruba with a gorgeous vista right near the airport, known always as Surfside; for some time now the building adjacent to it has gone through a string of owners seeking an appropriate identity for this special place, and it looks like it has finally found it with the opening of the Nikky Beach Club Aruba.

Our investigative team from THE MORNING NEWS went down to have a look at this latest venture, and we found just the kind of authentically tranquil, Caribbean ambiance vacationers seek when visiting

Aruba. New owner Hans and his GM Paul have completely renovated and redesigned the venue to fully showcase this charming location while providing a very reasonably priced menu and bar.

November is the month to get acquainted with Nikky Beach as they are offering an introductory dinner special of only \$15 for a three-course meal or a different Entrée de Jour each day of the week for only \$10. This is available from 5:00 to 9:30 p.m., so you can finish up an afternoon spent on the beach, catch a meal after a dive with the ad-

jacent SCUBA shop, or savor your supper along with one of the most spectacular locations to watch our amazing Aruban sunsets.

Jan and Paul have dubbed Sunday's at Nikky Beach "Rehab Day," when they provide a particularly pleasant ambiance with popular local and international DJ's from noon on and \$3 Mimosas all day long. During the traditional Happy Hour time slot, they feature live music with top local groups specializing in the soft sound of the islands.

Some extremely interesting items on the menu captured



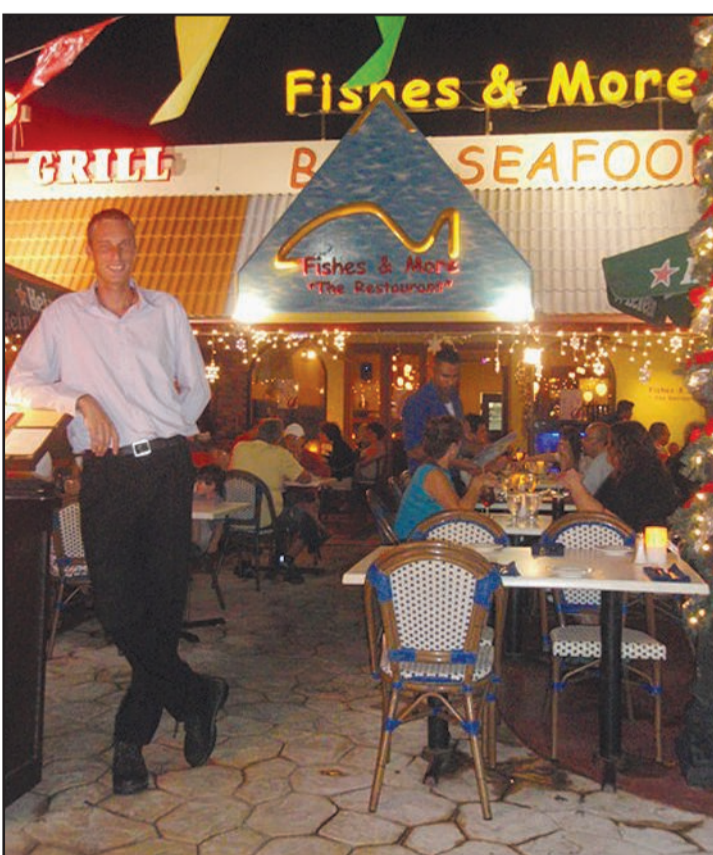
our interest along with very moderate prices; aside from the November special you can expect an a la carte tab that will add to your enjoyment. Their chef offers an extensive fusion selection that reveals expertise in several notable cuisines; a nice variety that will please everyone's mood. For lunch and snacking you find a varied choice of classic salads, favorite local treats, pastas and gourmet sandwiches. Kitchen is open from 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. serving breakfast, lunch and dinner.

One last interesting tidbit: Paul explained they offer a customized Departure Day Package that allows vacationer to stow their luggage, enjoy all their amenities, choose a meal,

drinks or both and they will personally guarantee getting you to the airport in plenty of time for the flight. Changing rooms and showers let you swim and beach it until departure time and you can linger without rushing, as the airport is only 2 minutes away; no worries about fighting traffic or delays. "Why should you end your stay on a hurried and harried note?" asks Paul. "You can join us for the day and keep that relaxed island ambiance up to the last minute; it doesn't have to end at check out." The package requires reservations, which can be made by calling 582-0153 or contact them through their website: www.nickybeacharuba.com.

by Rosalie Klein

Food & Wine Festival at cozy Arawak Garden on January 22



Saturday January 22 should be on your 'things to do' list! It is the date of the monthly Food

& Wine Festival, held at the Arawak Garden across from the high rise hotels. The cozy

courtyard will be filled with the sounds of live music and there are wine tastings and more. All the restaurants of the Arawak Garden have come up with enticing specials, so come and enjoy!

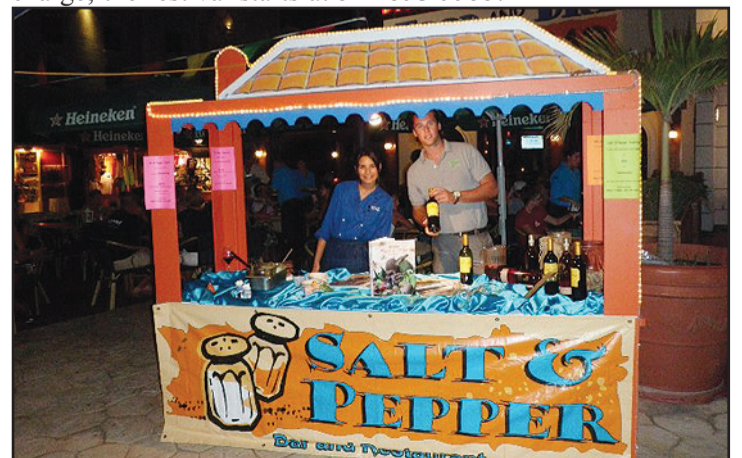
Popular Salt & Pepper offers a Tapas Platter for Two with a pitcher of Sangria for US \$ 30.--; there is a choice of six tapas. Tango Restaurant, where one can find the best meat on the island, is serving a Mixed Grill Skewer with a glass of Sangria for \$ 19.95 per person, while Burger King lures everyone with a free dessert with the purchase of any Value Meal.

But this is not all: Fishes & More is going all-out with a three-course menu for just \$ 21.75; Casa Tua follows suit with a Seafood Risotto for \$ 26.--. Mmmmm. Piano bar Sopranos, the hippest place for drinks, is featuring a fantastic piano player, who is belting out requests. A live cigar roller will be entertaining you as well.



Entrance to the Food & Wine Festival at cozy Arawak Garden (across from the Occidental Resort) is free of charge; the festival starts at 5

pm; it is sponsored by Pepia Est, Romar Trading, Comprá and Aruba Wine and Dine. For more information, please call 593-9955.



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Philatelic exposition marks the 25th anniversary of Aruba's "Status Aparte"



Post Director with island dignitaries

When Aruba achieved autonomy within the Dutch Kingdom at the commencement of 1986, the various branches of civil service also were independent of the Netherlands Antilles. 2011 is the silver anniversary of not only the island's self-rule, but the creation of the Aruba Postal Service, and the issuance of stamps relative to Aruba alone. Aruba's first Director of an independent postal service was Robert S. Arends. The first Aruba stamps were ready on January 1, 1986, consisting of 4 stamps created by island

artist Evelino Fingal, the same who designed Aruba's money, and a Status Aparte Commemorative Set produced by Nigel Matthew.

This is being celebrated with a two-month philatelic exposition, which opened at the central post office in Oranjestad on Tuesday, January 18. Hundreds of impressive miniature works of art will remain on display during office hours until Aruba's National Day, March 18.

The Aruba Postal Service became Post Aruba N.V. in September of 2005, with a pri-



A Dramatic entrance to the exhibit

vatization of the service. Current Post Aruba Director Kees van Nedercassel along with Director of Marketing and Philately Jennifer Kock welcomed island dignitaries including Prime Minister Mike Eman, Minister of Finance, Communication, Utilities and Energy Mike de Meza, Minister of Economic Affairs, Social Affairs and Culture, Michelle Hooyboer-Winklaar, and parliamentarians Lorna Varnick and Andy Lee for the opening event. Aruba's Governor Fredis Refunjol was awarded the honor of officially opening the special entrance to the exposition by inserting an enormous letter ceremoniously handed to him by Post Aruba employees.

The opening night festivities were also graced with the presence of many of the artists who were commissioned to create Aruba's beautiful stamps over the last two and a half decades. Along with each commemorative issue, they also designed coordinated envelopes and a special stamp to cancel those issued with the first day collectors' item. There were three issues of "Status Aparte" commemoratives issued; those in 1986, again for the 10th anniversary in 1996, and this year, marking the sil-



Status aparte commemorative issues, first year, 10 years and 25 years



Wrecks and reefs of Aruba

ver anniversary.

Subject matter of the works is a panorama of Aruban nature, culture, architecture, history, and achievement, including political and historic figures among others who have made memorable contributions to every aspect of island life. Other landmark commemoratives on display include 100 years of Postal Service on Aruba in 1992, Silver Anniversary Celebration of

the Ascension to the Throne of Queen Beatrix, among the beautifully rendered tributes to myriad aspects of Aruban life.

The two-month exposition is a treat for art lovers, historians and Arubaphiles as well as stamp collectors. It is worth a trip to Oranjestad for a visit to the central post office, located across from the San Francisco church.

by Rosalie Klein



Aruba's first stamps from 1986

COMICS

PICKLES



MOMMA



CALVIN and HOBBS



CROSSWORD



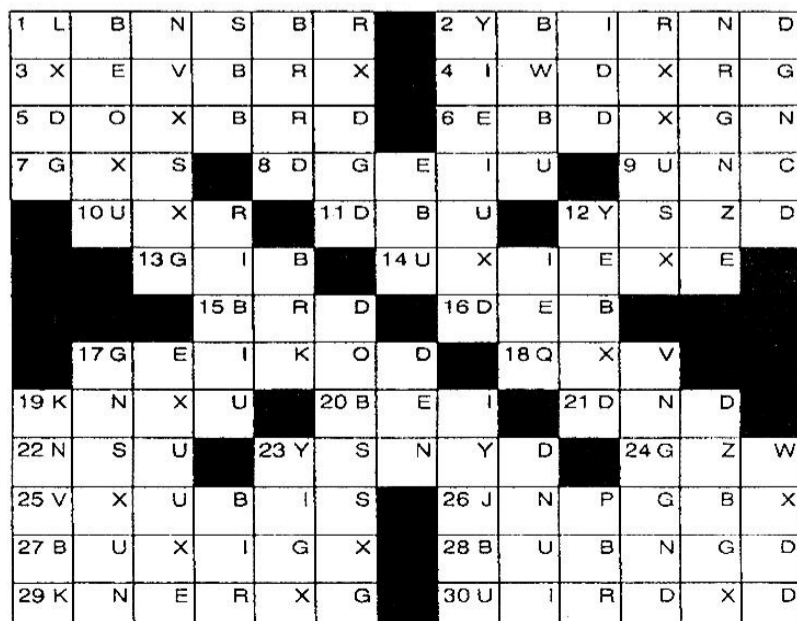
CROSSCODE

FREE Coverage on our website:
www.themorningnewsaruba.com

Crosscode is a crossword and a code puzzle in one! Clues for only the words reading across are provided. Fill in other squares in the puzzle according to the letter in the upper right hand corner of each square. For instance, if the answer to one across is EACH, and there is a Z in the first square, write the letter E in every square with a Z in it. Work back and forth between the clues and the code letters until the Crosscode is complete. All 26 letters of the alphabet may not necessarily be used.

ACROSS

- | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Perlman's instrument | 10. Cozy place | 22. Ancient |
| 2. Steinways | 11. ____ Caesar | 23. Falls, as ketchup |
| 3. Royal fur | 12. Addition word | 24. Barrel |
| 4. Missing | 13. Skater Babilonia | 25. Average |
| 5. Yarn units | 14. More precious | 26. Hamper |
| 6. ____ the occasion | 15. Elected ones | 27. Think |
| 7. ____ Aviv | 16. ____ Lanka | 28. Fools |
| 8. Famous 1 Across | 17. Footprints | 29. Trumpet |
| 9. Famous Wall Street name | 18. Gender: abbr. | 30. Waltz and minuet, to Pierre |
| | 19. Female student | |
| | 20. Author Levin | |
| | 21. Help call, at sea | |



BOTICA

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 and Drug Addiction
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 Telephone Helpline
 583-1190
 Mon.-Thu. 9 p.m.-12 midn.
 Fri.-Sun. 9 p.m.-2 a.m.

CAS MARIE
 Alzheimer's Day
 Care Center
 Tel: 5696910

Important
 Telephone
 Numbers

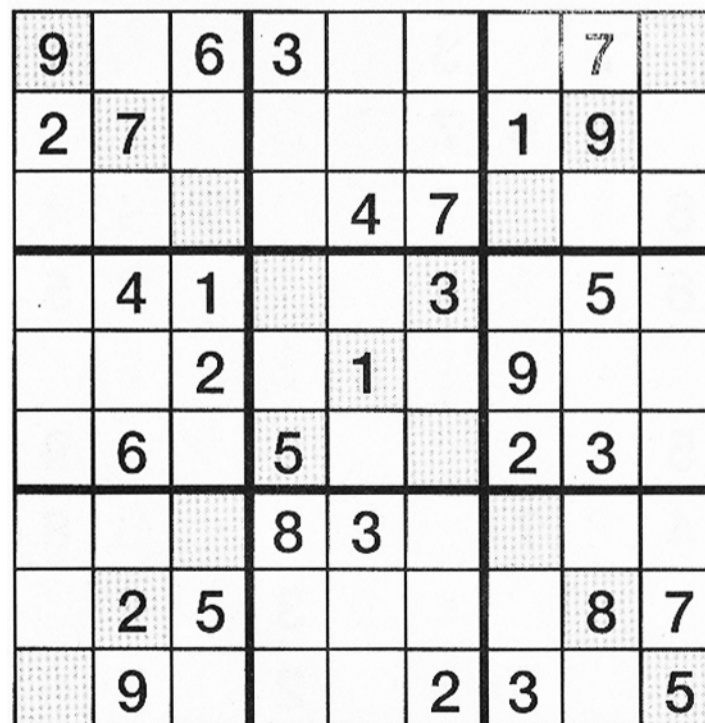
HOSPITAL
 Horacio Oduber Hospital
 Tel. 587-4300

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 Telephone 911
 POLICE HDQS
 Telephone 100

TAXI
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 587-1998, 587-5900
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Sudoku



SOLUTION

5	1	3	2	7	4	8	6	9
7	8	4	6	9	1	5	2	3
6	2	5	3	8	7	4	1	9
1	3	2	4	8	6	9	7	5
8	7	6	9	1	7	2	3	5
9	5	7	8	3	2	1	4	6
2	9	8	7	4	6	3	5	1
3	6	1	8	9	9	7	2	2
4	7	5	1	2	3	9	8	6

Complete the grid so that every row and every column contains the numbers 1 through 9
 A number is Never repeated in a row or column.
 In addition every rectangle must contain the numbers 1 through 9



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Finance

Making your Competition Irrelevant

Here are a few ways to make your competition irrelevant



Focus on the "moment of truth", the place or position that your products or services will be offered to the customer. For example, if you have a retail establishment, this may be a wall display or a counter display.

On the internet this may be an on-line store, E-bay if you have an account with them to offer your products, or your own personal web site. Sometimes the moment of truth may be in the form of a bid or proposal after several months of working to convert your prospect into a client or customer.

The moment of truth is the moment that the customer has an option to make a purchasing decision, to buy your product, or to invest in your services. This is the moment you need to put your best foot forward.

Each time you present something to your prospect or customer, provide a value proposition to them. Your value proposition should be something that can be con-

veyed in three to five precise and succinct statements.

A value proposition should contain the essential elements of feature, advantage, benefit, and offer. This is a reference to a specific important feature of your offer, the advantage as compared to the competition and what's in it for your customer.

The other thing you can do is to differentiate yourself from the competition. Common examples of differentiation for products may be size, speed, color, or accessories. Examples of differentiation for services would be performance, quality, availability, or ease of use. Show how your product or service is better than the competition.

In today's world, our clients and customers are bombarded with so much information, advertisements, and commercials that it is sometimes impossible to keep the attention of your prospects focused on what you are saying to them.

If you focus your methods on the Moment of Truth and create a differentiation, you will leave your competition in the dust.

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CURRENCY



US, China ink \$45 bln of export deals

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The United States and China have agreed export deals worth \$45 billion dollars on the margins of President Hu Jintao's US state visit, a senior Washington official said.

"We will be announcing that \$45 billion of US export deals have been concluded, supporting 235,000 US jobs," the official said.

The total includes deals worth \$25 billion spread over 70 contracts and 12 US states and a massive contract for Boeing.

"The Chinese government will announce that it will approve the purchase of 200 Boeing aircraft, with an estimated value of \$19 billion dollars," the official said.

Chinese businesses have descended on the United States to coincide with Hu's four-day visit, inking agreements with US titans Alcoa, General Electric, Honeywell, Westinghouse

and Caterpillar.

The deals span sectors as diverse as agriculture, gasification, railways and hybrid buses.

An additional three billion dollars' worth of Chinese investment in the United States has also been announced.

Trade spats have complicated relations in recent years, with US officials and lawmakers appearing increasingly exasperated about cheap Chinese products flooding the US market.

Washington has complained that Beijing has kept the value of its currency artificially low to boost its exports, risking dangerous imbalances in the global economy.

But US officials tried to shift the focus onto the benefits of trade with China, namely



Chinese investment in the United States and US exports to China.

Both presidents and expected to meet with US and Chinese chief executives later in the day to underscore that message.

"(The) US firms are some of the major firms that have been exporting products to China, and the Chinese firms that have invested in the United States and created jobs in the United States," the US official said.

Swiss government freezes Gbagbo funds



Incumbent Ivory Coast president Laurent Gbagbo, seen here in 2010.

GENEVA (AFP) — The Swiss government this week ordered a freeze on any funds held in the country by Ivory Coast strongman Laurent Gbagbo or his entourage.

The government "has decided to block any possible funds of Ivory Coast president Laurent Gbagbo ... with immediate effect," said Micheline Calmy-Rey, the Swiss foreign minister who is also serving as Swiss president this year.

With the move, the government is preventing Switzerland's financial centre from serving as a refuge for any possible "illegally-obtained assets owned by Gbagbo" and his entourage, added authorities in a statement.

The freeze would last three

years, and comes after decisions by the European Union and the United States to block Gbagbo's assets.

It was "important that Switzerland came quickly to a decision" to prevent any funds from being transferred to Switzerland as a result of the EU's sanction that came into effect mid-January, said Calmy-Rey.

The EU's sanction covered not just Gbagbo and 87 associates, but also 11 vital industries, including the cocoa and coffee businesses and the port of Abidjan.

Ivory Coast has been locked in a political standoff after Gbagbo refused to step down following presidential elections, despite a vote which the Independent Electoral Commission, UN and most of the world said his rival Alas-

sane Ouattara won.

Switzerland has also recognised Ouattara as having won the elections.

Calmy-Rey described Berne's move as a "preventive and precautionary" measure to stop Gbagbo or his entourage from moving any public assets out of the country amid the political standoff.

It would "prevent all risks of embezzlement of the funds before their origin could be clearly determined," she noted, adding that the freeze had been ordered as "there is a risk that public assets could be turned into gains" and pocketed privately.

And it was not realistic to await official requests from Ivory Coast before freezing the assets because "the person and his entourage is still in government," the minister added.

YESTERDAY'S Crossword Answer

ALAR	SPIT	PLUSH
LIIT	EURO	RENTA
DANG	CLEAR	ASDAY
ARTHURS	DIT	ULE
TREE	BEHELD	
SAVANT	LHASA	
CRASS	TEIL	RODS
AMIR	GRAND	DREI
MYNA	LIST	FACED
IDIOT	SESAME	
LEANE	BEAN	
ART	BEE	AERATOR
GOODAS	GOLD	IRMA
EDNAS	ELEE	LUNG
REESE	REDD	SEIS

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Ellioti's offers fine Italian cuisine and cozy island ambiance



Chef Jeffrey Elliot

Since opening in May of 2009, Ellioti's, located adjacent to the Costa Linda parking lot, has established itself as one of the most popular restaurants in the "low-rise" area. Owner Adrianna Sanchez has paid a lot of attention to detail and personally presides over her domain with a welcoming smile and a sincere concern for the satisfaction of her patrons.

The eatery is named for Chef Jeffrey Elliot, who was instrumental in establishing one of Aruba's original and most popular Italian restaurants of days past, Valentino's. He has brought his deft hand to this charming new location, offering a diversity of dishes which has earned it high praise on a number of Internet review sites such as Tripadvisor and restaurantsaruba.com. "A hidden jewel" effuses one enthusiastic customer, "the best Shrimp Fra Diabolo I have ever had!" Another reviewer on Tripadvisor credits Ellioti's with "the best Fettucine Carbonara that



Adrianna and staff



Saturdays feature Gerardo on the guitar

I've ever had - and I've eaten at a lot of New York area Italian restaurants."

Ellioti's offers al fresco dining on their charming terrace or air-conditioned comfort in the dining room with the ambiance of a cozy Italian home. Fresh homemade pasta at extremely reasonable prices is their specialty, along with authentic Italian treatment of steak, seafood and fowl.

Three nights a week the restaurant features live music



from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.; every Tuesday enjoy piano accompaniment to your meal, on Saturdays Gerardo will enchant you with his gentle guitar.

If you enjoy a social evening with friends and good conversation with your meal, Ellioti's extremely tranquil setting is the perfect place to savor fine food and company.

Open from 6:00 to 10:00 p.m. six days a week, closed on Sunday.

It is recommended you call 588-7329 or 588 7339 to make reservations.



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Nicole Kidman, Keith Urban welcome new baby girl

LOS ANGELES, California – Oscar-winning actress Nicole Kidman and her country star husband, Keith Urban, announced they were parents of a new baby daughter born with a surrogate.

"Our family is truly blessed, and just so thankful, to have been given the gift of baby Faith Margaret," the couple said in a statement.

"No words can adequately convey the incredible gratitude that we feel for everyone who was so supportive throughout this process, in particular our gestational carrier."

Kidman, 43, Urban, 43, were married in 2006 and have another daughter together, Sunday Rose, born in 2008.

In the mood for BBQ-discover where islanders go: Baby Back Ribs



Every town has this ideal location for a terrific restaurant, but eateries come and go because none quite gets the recipe right for good food and appealing price; Oranjestad had such a spot at the far end of its main street, and brother Merly and sister Joanne Kelly came up with the solution. The island ambiance allows diners to relax and watch as the world goes by, offering a window on local life.

Arubans love their barbecue, but so many places offer it, you better be sure you have the quality at the right price with appealing side dishes to compete. Baby Back Ribs has occupied this cute little corner for three years now, and is an unqualified success. Luncheon and dinner time you will see the locals lined up to either take home a serving stacked with a large selection of favorite regional dishes, such as Saté or the always popular standards of BBQ chicken or ribs.

Baby Back Ribs has been such a success it earned a spot in the Lonely Planet Caribbean Guide, which is dedicated to finding those great out of the way places tourists rarely discover and offer an authentic taste of their destination. Kristina and Shawn arrived on a cruise ship all the way from Alaska and confirmed that searching out Baby Back Ribs was well worth the effort. They shared the restaurant's ample portion of succulent spare ribs and awarded it



Dig in



Shawn thanks lonely planet for a great recommendation

two thumbs up.

Aside from the regular menu, the eatery offers at least three specials per day; usually costing \$5.50 for a regular portion and \$7 for the large, enough to feed two. They stay open late to cure a case of after disco munchies, and you can pre-order to take back to your timeshare or hotel room

by calling 582-4410.

If you are planning a shopping trip to town, pencil it in as your lunch stop and be sure to order one of their great homemade sauces, such as Chimichuri Picante or Papaya Pica for an authentic taste of island cuisine.

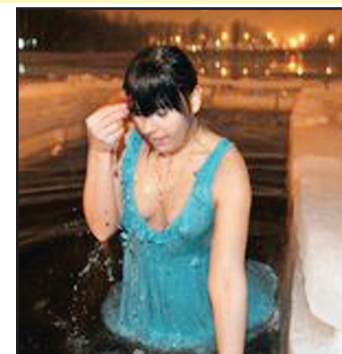
Thousands of Russians jump in ice holes for holiday

MOSCOW, Russia (AFP) – Thousands of Russians jumped into holes cut in ice this week on the holiday of the Epiphany, when Russian Orthodox believers take part in a baptism ceremony.

Russians stripped to swimsuits or loose robes to plunge into cross-shaped holes cut in frozen rivers, believing that the water takes on sacred powers on the holiday, which commemorates the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist.

The head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill, held an all-night service in Moscow's Yelokhovsky cathedral and in the morning was to bless water, which believers collect in bottles, crediting it with healing powers.

Church spokesman Vladimir Legoida, warned believers only to jump into ice holes after consulting a doctor, the RIA Novosti news agency reported, as temperatures fell below 30 degrees Celsius in



A woman is seen here entering an ice hole on a lake in Minsk during the Orthodox Epiphany holiday service....

Siberia.

In Moscow around 58,000 people gathered to jump in ice holes overnight, far exceeding last year's total of 32,000 people, city police spokesman Viktor Biryukov told RIA Novosti.

Rescue workers at the emergency ministry manned 46 officially sanctioned ice holes in the city, where the temperature was minus 15 degrees Celsius.

Spacey, Moore and 3D in focus at Berlin film fest

BERLIN, Germany (AFP) – A financial crisis thriller starring Kevin Spacey and Demi Moore and a French 3D animated feature will vie for the top prizes at next month's Berlin film festival, organisers said.

The 61st edition of the festival, running from February 10-20, will showcase 22 films in its main programme including 16 in the running for the festival's coveted Golden and Silver Bear top prizes, the organisers said in a statement announcing the complete list of competitors.

Among the new entries announced were "Margin Call", a feature film debut by J.C. Chandor starring Spacey, Moore, Jeremy Irons and Paul Bettany and set at an investment bank at the start of the turmoil in global financial markets.

US director Joshua Marston, whose drug-mule drama "Maria Full of Grace" picked up two prizes at the 2004 Berlinale, as the event is known, will screen "The Forgiveness of Blood" about an Albanian family locked in a blood feud.

France's Michel Ocelot will unveil "Tales of the Night", a fairy tale in 3D based on his silhouette animation television special -- one of three pictures at the festival that will burst through the third dimension.

And Iranian film-maker As-

ghar Farhadi -- who won a best director prize for his haunting drama "About Elly" at the 2009 festival -- will be back with "Nader and Simin, A Separation" about an estranged couple reunited by a surprise event.

Farhadi faced a production ban by Iranian authorities while making the film for comments in support of jailed director Jafar Panahi, whom the festival will also honour this year. The ban was later lifted. "We invited Jafar Panahi to be on the International Jury in 2011. But then in December 2010 he was sentenced to six years' imprisonment and banned from film-making for the next 20 years," festival director Dieter Kosslick said.

"We are going to use every opportunity to protest against this drastic verdict," he said in a statement.

The Berlinale will show a number of his films including the prize-winning "Offside" about girls who dress up as boys to sneak into a football stadium, and stage a panel discussion with Iranian film-makers on censorship.

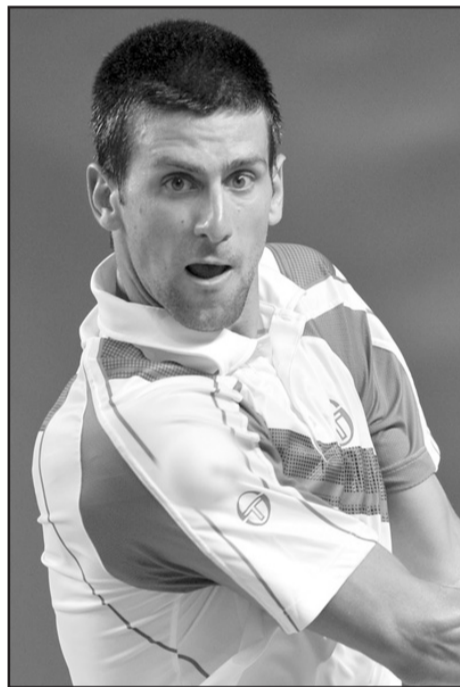
The event -- one of Europe's top film festivals -- will open with a remake of the classic Western "True Grit" by the Oscar-winning brothers Joel and Ethan Coen, it announced in December.

Italian-American actress Isabella Rossellini will chair the prize jury.

Federer, Djokovic struggle at Open



Federer



MEL-

Djokovic

BOURNE (AFP) - Defending champion Roger Federer narrowly avoided his earliest Grand Slam exit in eight years, while former winner Novak Djokovic also had to work overtime at the Australian Open on Wednesday.

The Swiss world number two escaped with a dramatic five-set victory over Frenchman Gilles Simon, going through on his fifth match point 6-2, 6-3, 4-6, 4-6, 6-3 win in 3hr 13min on Rod Laver Arena.

Federer will play Belgium's Xavier Malisse in Friday's third round where he will be joined by Serbian third seed Djokovic, who had a four-set win over Croatian Ivan Dodig.

The in-form Serb was always expected to be too good for the 81st-ranked Dodig, but was fractionally off his game and struggled to quell his spirited opponent before eventually winning 7-5, 6-7 (8/10), 6-0, 6-2.

Elsewhere on an eventful

day three, Spain's Fernando Verdasco battled back from two sets down to win another five-set thriller, while American Andy Roddick advanced in straight sets and Frenchman Gael Monfils needed four sets.

But Federer was a mighty relieved man to have survived a major scare from the 34th-ranked Simon, who had won their only two previous encounters.

The Swiss world number two had cruised to a two-set advantage, but Simon roared back to take

the contest into a fifth and deciding set.

Federer counted himself lucky to have avoided his worst Grand Slam performance since losing in the first round at the 2003 French Open.

"Today I got lucky to go through," Federer said.

"He's a great player. Matches against him don't come easy and they always go the distance. Hopefully I won't play him any more," he

Woods to launch season at Torrey Pines

SAN DIEGO, California (AFP) - Tiger Woods will launch his 2011 PGA Tour season next week in San Diego, officially entering the Farmers Insurance Open at Torrey Pines on Wednesday.

Woods has won the last five times he has competed at the Torrey Pines course, including his epic 2008 US Open playoff victory over Rocco Mediate.

laughed.

There were security concerns around Djokovic's match, with a past history of clashes between Serb and Croat fans, including in 2009 when chairs were thrown and a spectator was knocked unconscious.

However, there were no concerns this time, with Serbian fans well outnumbering the handful of Croatian supporters at Melbourne Park's Hisense Arena.

Djokovic's next match will be against countryman and Davis Cup final teammate, 29th seed Viktor Troicki.

Ninth seed Verdasco looked on the way out before fighting back to eliminate Serbia's Janko Tipsarevic 2-6, 4-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7/0), 6-0 in just under four hours, recalling his record 5hr 14min semi-final loss to Rafael Nadal in 2009.

"I just keep fighting all the time, because I was really close to losing today," Verdasco said. "I think that just my mentality was the key, one of the biggest keys today to my comeback."

Eighth seed Roddick encountered early resistance before putting away 99th-ranked Russian Igor Kunitsyn 7-6 (9/7), 6-2, 6-3.

Roddick will next play Dutchman Robin Haase, who knocked out Argentine 26th seed Juan Monaco in four sets.

Monfils, the 12th seed, ousted Portugal's Frederico Gil 6-4, 6-3, 1-6, 6-2.

Czech sixth seed Tomas Berdych needed four sets to overcome Germany's Philipp Kohlschreiber while American 16th seed Mardy Fish bowed out to Spain's Tommy Robredo.

Other winners Wednesday were Croatia's 17th seed Ivan Ljubicic, Japan's Kei Nishikori, French 28th seed Richard Gasquet and Malisse.

"I've been working hard on my game, it's game time hooah!!" Woods Tweeted on Wednesday.

He hasn't played at the ocean front course since then, missing the PGA Tour event there in 2009 as he recovered from knee surgery and missing last year as he was absent from golf for three months in the aftermath of revelations of marital infidelity.





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Messi dismisses Ballon d'Or critics

BARCELONA (AFP) - Barcelona striker Lionel Messi dismissed media criticism of his second successive World Player of the Year award, in an interview published Wednesday.

Messi, who won the Ballon d'Or on January 10 for the second straight year, had been expected to lose out to one of Spanish World Cup stars Andres Iniesta or Xavi after he endured a modest World Cup for Argentina.

"The truth is I don't care what the media say. What matters to me is what my teammates say, the people

who are with me. I thank them for their support," the Argentine said in an interview with sports news site goal.com.

Two days after winning the Ballon d'Or, Messi hit a hat-trick in Barcelona's 5-0 rout of Real Betis.

Asked if the performance vindicated his award, he said: "I don't have to vindicate myself to anyone. I did the same thing I have been doing up to now; I will try to carry on playing good matches and will try to help my team as much as I can."

Ronaldo says Kaka improving

MADRID (AFP) - Real Madrid's Brazilian midfielder Kaka is improving after knee surgery but is not yet 100 percent fit, striker Cristiano Ronaldo said in an interview published Wednesday.

"Kaka is getting better. He is still not 100 percent, he has to carry on improving, gradually playing more," Ronaldo said in an interview with sports daily Marca.

"He will get back to the competitive level he had before, with a bit more difficulty, the same as anyone who has had an operation and a serious injury," he said.

Kaka, 28, underwent sur-

gery on his left knee on August 5 and only returned to training last month.

Ronaldo said Kaka was working hard to get back.

"I am sure he will triumph," he added.

"If he does not have any more injuries he will be very important for us because he is still a star."

Ronaldo rejected as unfair criticism that French striker Karim Benzema had failed to take advantage of the absence of his injured Argentine teammate Gonzalo Higuain, who could be out for four months.

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Westwood, Mickelson open season in Abu Dhabi



ABU DHABI (AFP) - World number one Lee Westwood leads a star parade at the Abu Dhabi HSBC Golf Championship, which kicks off the four-tournament Desert Swing of the European Tour from Thursday.

Along with Westwood, the focus will be on the four Major champions of last year - Phil Mickelson (Masters), Graeme McDowell (US Open), Louis Oosthuizen (Open Championship) and Martin Kaymer (PGA Championship) - who are all entered for the 2.7 million dollars tournament, which is being played at the National course of Abu Dhabi Golf Club.

For the first time in his career, Mickelson will be starting the season outside the United States, and his first visit to the Middle East with the entire family, including wife Amy, has given credence to his recent resolution of becoming a more global player.

But even as he spoke about his excitement of starting his new season in a com-

pletely foreign country, Mickelson refused to get drawn into any comments about his plans to overthrow Westwood from the number one position in world golf rankings.

Mickelson, who now plays regularly in Shanghai, Singapore, Japan and Scotland, said: "I started practising a little bit earlier than normal because I'm antsy and excited to start the year and the opportunity to play here on a wonderful golf course in great weather in a beautiful country."

in a beautiful country.

"It's a great place to start the year."

While Mickelson may be actively trying to block out any thoughts of becoming world number one, Westwood has embraced his new-found status and is no mood to let it go, or trade it for a Major title.

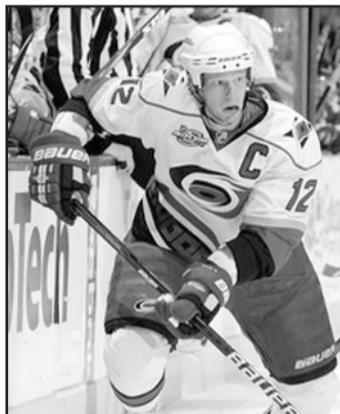
"It would be nice to go to the Masters as the world number one, but it's not something I really focus on," said Westwood, who finished second here in 2009 and missed the cut last year.

"If I play well in the tournaments, then that takes care of itself. It is very reflective of the way people play. My main goal is to try and win some of these early season tournaments."

"And no, I wouldn't swap anything. Because in sport, and especially golf, you get what you deserve."

"I've worked incredibly hard over 17 years, or even more than that, to get to world number one, and I'm not going to give it up for anything."

Staal, Lidstrom named NHL all-star captains



TORONTO (AFP) - Canadian forward Eric Staal and Swedish blueliner Nicklas Lidstrom were selected as the NHL all-star team captains, in charge of picking the two teams out of a pool of elite players.

Lidstrom, of the Detroit Red Wings, is one of the best defensemen in NHL history and will be appearing in his 12th all-star game.

Staal is a captain of the host Carolina Hurricanes and will be making his fourth all-star appearance. He was chosen the most valuable player of the all-star game three years ago.

The status of the NHL's leading scorer Sidney Crosby is in doubt for the game.

The Pittsburgh Penguins star remains sidelined with a concussion. If Crosby can't play it will mark the third time he's missed an all-star game because of injury. He appeared in his only all-star game four years ago.

Staal last week told a Canadian television station that he'd like to use his first pick in the draft to take his Carolina teammate and Hurricanes goalie Cam Ward. His brother, Rangers defenseman Mark Staal, is also up for grabs.

The captains will select their teams in a live draft two days prior to the game.

The only rules governing the draft are that goaltenders must be taken after each team's 10th pick and defensemen have to be gone by the 15th selections. That leaves forwards to pick up the slack late.

Some notable names that were left off the all-star roster are the Philadelphia Flyers' Daniel Briere (24 goals, 40 points) and Dallas Stars forward Brenden Morrow (18 goals). Morrow was a member of Canada's 2010 gold medal-winning Olympic team.

Briere has 10 more goals than forward David Backes who was the lone player chosen to represent the St. Louis Blues.

With the new format someone has to face the indignity of being the final selection.

Asked about potentially being the last pick, Backes, known more as a checker than a scorer, said: "I think I got a little more steam in my engine than that."

The annual all-star game is January 30 in Raleigh, North Carolina.



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Team Aruba's new racer hits the road



Team Aruba continues to bring pride to their country in the U. S. drag racing circuit. The accomplished driver is Trevor Eman, a 24-year-old Aruban who is a senior at the University of Central Florida in Orlando, majoring in Mechanical Engineering.

He and his dad proudly claimed Team Aruba's new 2011 Ford Mustang Pro Stock race car in St. Louis, Missouri, on January 5, and drove 18 hours to Bradenton Motorsport Park in Bradenton, Florida, to test it out.

They rented the track for two days for testing and adjustments. The first test runs went well and the team is very pleased with the results. Some photos of the test session, courtesy of Team



Aruba, are attached.

We are all looking for-

ward to a stellar year for Team Aruba!

Venus in Wonderland dressed for success

MELBOURNE (AFP) - Venus Williams reached into the world of make-believe during her amazing comeback win over unheralded Czech Sandra Zahlavova in the second round of the Australian Open on Wednesday.

Wearing a self-designed dress based on "Alice in Wonderland", Williams lived out her own fantasy as she recovered from a painful groin injury to overcome the gallant Zahlavova 6-7 (6/8), 6-0, 6-4.

Williams' unusual outfit featured a yellow criss-cross pattern showing plenty of skin and a tiny patterned skirt, with flesh-coloured "nude" shorts underneath.

"The outfit is inspired by Alice in Wonderland. Don't laugh," she later said to guffaws. "It's kind of about a surprise, because when Alice goes down the hole, the rabbit hole, she finds all these things that are so surprising."

Venus, who turned heads with an extra-short, shimmering blue number in her opening match, has been the centre of attention in the absence of her injured sister Serena, known for her outlandish attire.

"This outfit is about having a surprise in tennis -- a dress, and kind of, you know, showing some skin and then just having a print," she said.



"Prints don't happen that often in tennis. So it's called the Wonderland dress. It was fun."

"I put a lot of thought into my dresses," she continued. "I love fantasy, and this was kind of a way to express who I am on the court."

And her dress garnered most of the attention as Williams raced away to an early 4-1 lead before Zahlavova launched a stirring comeback.

However, the steely determination of the fourth seed ensured she stayed in contention for her first ever Australian Open title, giving fans the chance to see her dress design skills at least one more time.

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